

Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 3, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Peter Jessop, Chair, in the Town Room at Town Hall

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michael Jacques, Peter Jessop, Chair; Ellen Kosmer, Mary Streeter, Clerk; Stan Ziomek

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Sandra Anderson, Gai Carpenter, John Gerber, Vince O'Connor

STAFF / OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sonia Aldrich, Nate Malloy, Diana Stein, Eve Vogel, Niels LaCour, Lynn Grabowski, M.J. Adams, Nancy Gregg, Chris Hoffmann, others

AGENDA

- Recreation Proposals:
 - Multi-Use Bike Path 7:05 pm
- Affordable Housing Proposals:
 - Habitat for Humanity 7:30 pm
 - Hawthorne House Feasibility Study 7:40 pm
 - Facilitating Restoration of Hawthorne House 8:00 pm
- Administrative Expense
- Approve any Minutes from last meeting

Presentation of Proposals

Recreation Proposals

Feasibility Study for a Multi-Use Path Connecting University of Massachusetts with North Amherst Center (\$50,000) – to be matched with \$50,000 in “in kind” professional services from University of Massachusetts.

Niels LaCour from UMass and Eve Vogel from Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee made the presentation. For a long time people have been discussing a bike path along a cinder road owned by the University connecting UMass with North Amherst as well as connecting it to a regional path. One aspect of the study would be to identify the preferred path. Niels projected a visual presentation that included maps and answers to CPAC questions.

Tasks of the feasibility study include:

- Identify potential route alignments from the UMass path to the North Amherst area.
- Evaluate the potential routes and rank them from best to worst for the path north of the existing cinder road
- Determine rights of way and easement issues
- Identify needed street and sidewalk realignments
- Identify potential conflicts with vehicles and evaluate mitigating measures
- Conduct interviews, surveys and/or focus groups with potential users
- Identify wetlands issues, including possible environmental impact, need for permits, and crossings
- Identify other permitting issues
- Develop preliminary project budget

Mary asked for clarification of the legal opinion we received from Town Counsel with regard to the requirement that the portion of the path funded by the Town would have to be for a single purpose recreational use (the last two paragraphs of the email) and wondered whether that would prevent the path from going through the parking lots of the apartment complexes. She hoped the committee would receive clarification before the need to vote on the project. Niels said good design could make a huge difference. Niels expects that the Town would contract with Vanasse, Hangen, and Brustlin (VHB), a large engineering firm from Boston. Niels said they did the design and permitting for the Norwottuck Rail Trail Connector (Swift Way). The University has just signed a contract with them to do the transportation portion of the University's Master Plan. It was stated that engineering work is exempt for the requirement to go out to public bid. Niels said the consultant would primarily be under the supervision of Guilford Mooring and engineers of the Public Work Department, with the Planning Department staff assisting with some of the public meetings.

Responses to CPAC Questions from the presentation:

- Can we legally fund a proposal such as this under CPA rules?

Yes. In an email response from Town Council to Sonia Aldrich's inquiry dated January 21, 2011, The Town is permitted to use CPA funds to “acquire” or “create” recreational land, as long as it is not already Town owned recreational land.

- Are private property owners (ie. Brandywine, etc.) interested in this project?

Yes. When UMass and the Town were previously engaged in planning for this project in the early 2000's, we had many meetings with the stakeholders and there was a general level of interest and support. This is potentially a marketing asset for them.

- Has this proposal been vetted by LSSE?

A copy of the proposal has been sent to them, but we have not received a response from them yet.

- Who specifically would do the study?

VHB. The Town would contract for engineering services from VHB, a multi-disciplinary firm that specializes in multi-modal transportation issues. VHB is the consultant who planned and designed Swift way and is also who UMass has hired to do their Transportation Master Plan, of which this project work is part of the effort.

- How would Town staff be involved?

As the project client, Town staff (primarily DPW Engineering) would be involved in the management and supervision of the consultant. Town staff would also help facilitate the work and any meetings that are necessary.

- Would the University sell the Town the property?

It is unlikely that the University will sell any land to the Town. However, UMass will likely sell or grant an easement in order to ensure the success of the project.

- It appears that the University has already committed its staff to do some work on this project.

Yes. The University has just begun its Campus Master Planning process. As part of this effort it has hired VHB to complete a "Study and Recommendations for Mobility Improvements for Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Vehicles." It is perfect timing for this project to be a part of the discussion of the future.

- What is the likelihood that this project is really going to happen in the real world?

Very Likely. This is a project whose time has come. It nearly got off the ground almost a decade ago. It represents a great opportunity to meet a huge latent demand in the apartment complexes for a connection to the larger bike path network. It is a relatively low cost project given the huge potential benefit for a sizeable population.

Stan wondered how the project would be affected by the University's budget cuts. Niels said the project is still a few years from being done so this is uncertain. Stan asked whether Meadow Street was wide enough for bike lanes. Guilford Mooring responded that this summer the Town intends to widen and resurface the road. Peter asked what the potential cost of the path would be. Guilford replied that, if the feasibility study has good analysis and guidance on the permitting process, the cost would range from \$200,000 to \$500,000 for a paved trail. Peter asked what commitments have been received from owners of private property. Guilford said that is unlikely until the owners see exactly what portions of their property would be taken. Mike asked about the part of the path that goes through Hadley. The University owns that part. Peter asked about likelihood that the wetlands would interfere with the success of the project. Guilford said he doesn't think it will. This question would be determined by the study. Niels said a UMass professor has had his students study the possibility of constructing bridges along the path; that professor may be able to get further funding if bridges are necessary. Mary asked for a detailed financial breakdown of the study costs for both the Town and University portions of the study (use of staff time, mapping, surveying, permitting, etc.). This could help make the case for Town Meeting to fund the project, as \$100,000 for a study might be considered a very high price. Peter asked how the University's "in kind" contribution would be tracked. Guilford said most of the costs for the Town portion would go directly to VHB. Mary asked if the study could be done for less money. Niels said no. Diana asked whether there are Department of Transportation grants available for bike trails. Guilford said there would not be funds for earmarks and that it would be competitive and the chance would be slim. Diana said she heard from Mass. Municipal Association that there might be money for bike trails. Peter reminded the presenters that an indication of positive interest from property owners would be helpful.

Affordable Housing Proposals

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity Belchertown Road Project – \$40,000

M. J. Adams said the fourth and final house on Stanley Street is nearing completion. The project has been featured in the book, The Power of Pro Bono by John Cary.

This proposal's site is on Belchertown Road across from Harkness Road on property donated by Doug Kohl. The property is assessed at \$143,000. A single family home is being designed *pro bono* by Chuck Roberts of Kuhn, Riddle Architects. On March 6 at Jones Library there will be an informational session on how to apply for a Habitat home. This proposal requests \$40,000 for construction services and materials. The new homeowner will receive a 0%

mortgage to pay for the construction costs totaling approximately \$120,000. The repaid mortgage funds will be invested in future homes. No additional funds will be needed for photovoltaics since the previous provider for the Stanley Street project will make donations for future Pioneer Valley Habitat homes. The expected completion date is May or June 2012. Nancy Gregg requested that future Habitat proposals be taken directly to the Housing Committee before going to CPAC.

Hawthorne House Feasibility Study – \$10,000 (to be matched with Historical Commission Proposal for \$10,000)

Nate Malloy said the study would examine what it would cost and whether it would be feasible to bring the existing structure up to code as an affordable unit and compare that cost with demolition of the existing house and building a new structure. The study would not examine other issues related to the use of the entire site. Peter suggested that the potential entities, i.e. financing and development partners that would fund and manage the property, should be identified for both rehabilitating the existing house and demolishing building a new structure.

Appraisals and Surveys – \$20,000

Mary noted that there is a request for \$20,000 for housing appraisals from the Community Development Block Grant funds and wanted to know whether this was in addition to these requested funds. Nate said the CDBG request is different and targeted for a specific property. He said this proposal is for future properties that have not yet been identified. Peter asked who would control the \$20,000 and how would decisions about spending it be made. Nate said it would be controlled by Town staff in a process similar to Open Space appraisal funds. Mary asked whether a lesser amount would be spent in a timely manner rather than having these funds be unused for more than a year.

Ellen pointed out that the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee voted to take “No action” on Vince O'Connor's Hawthorne property proposal and that the handout from this committee is in error.

Administrative

- **Community Preservation Coalition (\$1,500)** – for member dues for consultant services, conferences, public hearing notices, etc.
- **Signs for CPA projects (?)** – Peter will contact Stuart Saginor to learn where other CPA communities purchase their signs, whether there is a template available, etc.

Schedule of Presentations and Public Hearing

Thursday, February 17 – detailed presentations from Open Space and Historic Preservation

Thursday, March 3 – Public Hearing (Peter will be unable to attend)

Thursday, March 17

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Stan, 2nd by Mike to adjourn at 8:30pm. Voted unanimously.

NEXT MEETINGS

Our next meeting will be **Thursday, February 17, 2011 at 7:00 pm**. Our meetings are usually scheduled on the 3rd Thursday of the month from September through April 2011. Currently meetings are scheduled for March 3 (Public Hearing) & 17 (decisions), and April 21 (work on report to Town Meeting) & 28, and possibly May 18 (Wed.) and 26.

HOMEWORK

It is important for committee members to read materials ahead of time for the next meeting.

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- CPAC Agenda, 2/3/2011, 1 page
- Spreadsheet “CPAC FY2012 Proposals to be Considered for Recommendation to Town Meeting”, 1/27/2011, 1 page
- “FY2012 CPA Project Proposals” from Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee, 2/3/2011, 4 pages
- “Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity Presentation to Amherst Community Preservation Act Committee”, 2/3/2011, 6 pages
- Email “FW: CPA and painting restoration/preservation” from Katherine Roth to Tevis Kimball, 1/27/11, 2 pages
- Recreation Proposal Questions for Presentation on Feb. 3, 2011, 1 page

Respectfully submitted by Mary Streeter, Clerk

Approved April 7, 2011